THE PORT FOLIO,

(NEW SERIES)

BY OLIVER OLDSCHOOL, ESQ.

Various, that the mind of desultory man, studious of change and pleased with novelty, may be indulged—Cowp.

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ORIGINAL PAPERS.

For The Port Folio.

TRAVELS.

LETTERS FROM GENEVA AND FRANCE.

Written during a residence of between two and three years in different parts of those countries, and addressed to a lady in Virginia.

(*Continued from page* 340.)

LETTER XIX.

My dear E——,

AS I may not again have occasion to mention the Vallais to you, I may as well give you some account of that country now, and of the people who inhabit it, in addition to the information which you will find in different books of travels. The extreme length of the valley of the Rhone, which forms by far the greater part of the Vallaisan territory, is one hundred and twenty miles, and its greatest breadth about thirty; and there are several narrow recesses which lose themselves in the neighbouring mountains; there is nowhere a more strongly marked variety of soil and climate to be met with, than in the Vallais. To fertile fields succeed uncultivated deserts, and mountains covered with eternal snow, overhang those vallies where one experiences all the evils of heat, and moisture, and stagnated air: their intercourse with the rest of the world, except by the valley of the Rhone, is at all times difficult, and in winter rendered nearly impracticable by the fall of snow; so that they have remained longer than the rest of Europe in the darkness of the middle ages, and have universally incurred the imputation of ignorance, laziness and superstition. The upper Vallais, which was divided into seven communities, each possessing a portion of independent sovereignty, not unlike that of our states in America, and represented in the sovereign council or congress, became proprietors of the lower Vallais by right of

conquest in a war against the Duke of Burgundy in the year one thousand four hundred and seventy-six; had they now admitted their neighbours to a fair participation of rights, and not preferred the illiberal advantage of governing as subjects, those, whom they ought to have embraced as brethren, it is probable that their remote situation, the poverty of their country, their inoffensive politicks, and the facility with which they might have gratified France in granting a passage through their territory into Italy, would have insured their tranquillity; there is no arguing, I confess, on the probable conduct of the directory of the French republick, but the plausible pretext of liberating the oppressed, would not have been afforded them. Berne was taken in March, ninety eight, and the people of the upper Vallais were shortly after made to understand, that they must free their subjects from their allegiance, and admit them to the equal enjoyment of every civil and political privilege: to this, though with some degree of reluctance they consented, and the new election districts had been already marked out, and every preparatory measure taken for the important change, when there came a new order from the directory, that the Vallais was no longer to be considered as an independent state, but as a department of the new Helvetick government, which had lately been established upon the ruins of the Swiss aristocracy: the whole of the upper Vallais flew to arms upon this indignity being offered them, nor did they yield until all the powers of resistance had been exhausted in a succession of bloody actions, in which their towns and villages were taken by storm, their property destroyed, and the persons of the more helpless part of the community treated with a degree of atrocity, that human nature recoils from a description of. They have since, after another ineffectual effort, in eighteen hundred and one, and after undergoing every degree of oppression rather than request a union with France, been restored to a sort of mutilated independence, which leaves them like shipwrecked passengers upon a desert shore. The new road which is connected with Geneva on the one side, and with the Italian republick over the Simplon on the other, is carried on with very little attention to the comforts of these poor Vallaisans: it is by all accounts a stupendous work, and will save the exertions of future Hannibals and Bonapartes; but if the tide of power should ever set in a different direction, if some great potentate should ever spring up to the south of the Alps, and Italy be once more enabled, as in the time of the Romans, to avenge the insults and injuries which have been heaped up without mercy upon its ill fated inhabitants, good policy and self-defence may require, that this easy access to France should be stopped up again.

On our return from the rocks of Meillerai to Vevay, and about midway where St. Preux may be supposed to have been, when a fit of despair had almost got the better of him, the wind headed us, and the lake rose in gentle waves so as to give a representation in miniature of the appearance we had so lately been familiar with; I felt no temptation however to jump overboard with any body in my arms, but waited patiently, assisting sometimes at an oar, sometimes at the helm, until we ran

into a cove between Clarens and Vevay, and landed in the midst of a scene of labourers and sun-burnt maidens. You may now transport yourself back again to Secheron, observing however as you pass, how visibly the lake has retired from its former boundaries, which may be traced by the accumulation of pudding stone several feet above the present road, and deposited horizontally, and how regularly the Jura, like an immense wall, shuts in the prospect from the fort de l'Ecluse behind Rolle, where it begins to take a western direction, leaving that opening through which, in all probability, the waters flowed in former times towards the lake of Yverdun. The land about Vevay is cultivated almost entirely in grapes, and is frequently held at a price beyond what I could have supposed possible, had I not been on the spot and derived my information from the best authority; a pause of twenty-five thousand six hundred square feet, (French feet) or about two thirds of an English acre, has sold for five hundred pounds sterling, but the medium price, on an average during the last twenty years, may be called two hundred and fifty pounds an acre; the medium profit at the same rate has been about five per cent on the capital. My information on this subject and on some others, was from the clergyman of the parish, who having accidentally met —— ——— in the street, and having discovered him to be a foreigner by his accent, for —— ——— had inquired of him the way to the inn, had accompanied him and introduced himself to our acquaintance. He addressed us in good English, which I was not so much surprised at as to find in him, the brother of an old acquaintance, d'Eliant, a Swiss officer, who had served as brigade major to Gen. Moultrie, during the war of the revolution. The good man, who had been several years in England, was delighted to speak to us in the language of that country, and to make inquiries about America, which is the Eldorado of Switzerland.

The same sort of cultivation which prevails near Vevay, is to be found on the whole of the way to Geneva, and seems particularly well understood, and particularly profitable in the district of la Côte, which is a ramification of Jura, and presents an appearance, not unlike that of the south west mountains in Albemarle. The Jura reminded me of the Blue Ridge, which it resembles very much, except that it is considerably higher; there is a small portion of it immediately behind Nyon, which deserves your attention: it is where a smaller mountain known by the name of the Dole, rises above the general level and diversifies the scene: there is a plain on the top of it of small extent, but much visited by strangers, who are desirous of enjoying one of the most sublime of all prospects. It is there that the shepherds and labourers of the neighbourhood meet by immemorial custom on the first Sundays of August in every year: the best of everything that the mountain dairies can produce is prepared for their entertainment, and every sort of rural game contributes to make their time pass away delightfully. One may without any great effort of imagination suppose what are the topicks of conversation among such a group of rusticks, as they look about them from this elevated spot, of nearly a mile in perpendicular height above the

country below; their own fields and villages are at their feet, the larger towns of the Pays de Vaud are conspicuous, the Alps terminate the view on one side, and losing itself in the Alps is seen the road to Rome; Rome, the great fountain of indulgencies and dispensations, and always in some one way or other the seat of empire; the lakes of Geneva and of Yverdun are spread out in all their grandeur and magnificence of surrounding scenery, that of Annecy in Savoy appears at a distance, and that of Joux, seems bosomed in a deep vale, for ages, according to tradition the favourite seat of innocence and simplicity, whilst that of Morat, suggests to some gray-haired peasant, that he has heard of a famous battle fought upon its banks in days of yore, when the Swiss were men indeed, and would admit of no degrading medium between liberty and death.

One would hardly suppose that this isolated plain, so far removed in appearance above the cares and evils of the world, could have been the scene of a shocking tragedy, but the account which I have now before me, and from which I take my idea of the prospect, ends with a sad story, of a new married pair, whose fate will remind you of the lovers described in one of Gay's letters, as having been the victims of the same thunder storm: they had come up the mountain on their wedding day, followed by their nearest friends, and by the guests of the marriage feast, and having shared in the amusements of the place for sometime, had withdrawn a step or two from the company and were conversing at the edge of the plain, on that side where it ends abruptly. I am not so old, but that I can easily conceive the gay prospects of life, which animated their conversation; they were pointing, perhaps, to the very grove, where they first exchanged mutual vows, or, to the steeple of the church, where those vows had been ratified by heaven; or sitting silent with their eyes fixed on some retired valley, some distant hill side; where their new cottage was to rise "embosomed in a peach orchard," they perhaps already enjoyed in imagination, for they were young and very unexperienced, that endless succession of days, which were to roll away in never-ceasing happiness,

. . . "the seasons too,
As ceaseless round a jarring world they roll,
Would find them happy still, the genial Spring
Would shed her rosy garland on their heads;
'Till evening came at last, serene and mild,
When after the long vernal day of life,
Together freed their kindred souls would move
To scenes, where love and bliss immortal reign."

But heaven had ordered otherwise—suddenly the earth gave way under the feet of the bride, the husband caught her in his arms, and they were precipitated together into the abyss below; a rock which projects from the side of the precipice, full many a fathom down, remained stained with the blood of this ill-fated couple.

NEW BIOGRAPHY, OF SALLUST.

By Thomas Moore, Esq.

(Concluded from page 345.)

In the meantime the wreck of Pompey's army was collected under Cato and Scipio in Africa, and began to assume an aspect of resistance, which, though not very formidable, called for the atten-

tion of Cæsar. He accordingly gave directions to Sallust, whom he had appointed one of his lieutenants, to march with a body of troops to the coast, and there embark immediately for Africa. But long and painful service had wearied these hardy veterans. As soon as they arrived at the place of embarkation, and found that they were destined to new dangers, a spirit of mutiny declared itself, and they refused to obey the orders of their lieutenant. In vain did he threaten and promise; their discontent soon kindled into fury, and he was forced at length to consult his own safety by flight, while the malcontents proceeded with the most furious menaces towards Rome, murdering, indiscriminately, all who were ill-fated enough to encounter them. Cæsar, upon hearing of their approach, went forth to meet them alone, notwithstanding the representations of his friends, who trembled at the danger to which he exposed himself, and it was upon this occasion that by the single word "Quirites," he abashed a whole army of mutineers, and had them all repentant at his feet. Such was the dominion which he held over the soldiers, and must ever be the ascendency of those splendid qualities, which, like the shield of the magician in Ariosto, dazzle men out of their liberties.

E tolto per virtù dello splendore
La libertate a loro. Cant. ii.

Soon after the arrival of Cæsar in Africa, there were some apprehensions entertained of a scarcity of provisions for the troops; in consequence of which a part of the fleet was detached under the command of Sallust to take possession of the island of Cercina, in which a rich magazine had been formed by the enemy. "I do not pause to consider," said Cæsar, in giving orders to his lieutenant, "whether the service on which I send you is practicable or not; the situation in which we are placed admits neither of delay nor disappointment."* The enterprise, however, succeeded without much difficulty. Decimius, who commanded at Cercina, upon seeing the approach of the squadron, escaped to sea in a skiff, and abandoned the island to Sallust, who, taking possession of the stores, had the corn all shipped aboard his transports, and returned with the welcome supply to Cæsar.

This is the only occurrence during the war, in which the historian appears to have been prominently concerned; but either his services or his flattery recommended him so strongly to Cæsar, that he was appointed, after the conquest of Numidia, to the government of the whole African province, including Lybia, Numidia, and Mauritania, and extending along the coast from Carthage to the ocean.† If the wild irregularities of youth were all that could be objected to Sallust, his biographers would have lingered less harshly on his name, and the follies of the boy would have been forgotten in the greatness of the man.‡ But those cold vices of the

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* "It is not thus," says De Brosses, "that ordinary men are addressed; and when we recollect that it was Cæsar who gave these orders, we cannot but think highly of the talents of Sallust who received them."

† "Elle comprenoit la Lybie maritime, la Numidie et la Mauritanie; c'est-à-dire toute la côte d'Afrique depuis Carthage jusqu'à l'océan." M. de Brosses, Vie de Salluste, tom. iii. p. 360.

‡ There is something so meritorious in surmounting early frailties, that a manhood of virtue is even enhanced by a youth of irregularity. Neither the temperance nor

heart, which time can neither soften nor eradicate, were, unhappily, his leading characteristicks, and have left the darkest stain upon his memory. So active was the spirit of rapacity with which he plundered the subjects of his government, that in the course of a year he returned to Rome, sinking under the wealth which he had wrung from the unfortunate Numidians. An effort was made to bring him to an account for these extortions, but the fruits of his guilt enabled him to avert its punishment; a bribe administered to Cæsar was the spell which dissolved the prosecution, and Sallust was left to employ his affluent leisure in writing against luxury, speculation, and avarice.

With the wealth of the injured Africans he laid out those delicious gardens* which still "look green" in the pages of antiquity, and which were long the delight and the wonder of Rome. There, in the midst of parterres and porticos, with an Italian sky over his head, and the voluptuous statues of Greece before his eyes, the historian produced those rigid lessons of temperance, those strong delineations of character and those connected views of motives, events and consequences, which deserve so justly to be called "Philosophy teaching by examples." There, reposing in the temple of his Venus, after an interview, perhaps, with some fair Libertina, he inveighed against the sensuality of the Roman youth; or reclining amidst vases and pictures which African gold had purchased, composed his elaborate declamations against the rapacity of provincial governours.

Such were the labours and the luxuries, which Sallust was obliged to relinquish, before he could be weary of the one or sated with the other. He died at the age of fifty-one, in the year of Rome 718; and perhaps the best summary of his life and character is comprised in the following couplet of Young:

The man disgusts us, while the writer shines,
Our scorn in life, our envy in his lines!

The merits of Sallust as a writer and a historian have been often discussed, and are in general just-

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the orthodoxy of St. Austin would have appeared to us half so admirable, if he had not been in his youth both a Manichæan and a profligate.

* M. de Brosses, in his life of Sallust, has described these gardens very amply and accurately. The learned president visited Italy in the year 1739, and has given such a lively account of his travels that we cannot help wishing he had written more in this style, and had left all the learned lumber of his Sallust to German professours and Scotch doctors of laws. The following is his account of the site of these gardens: "Ils comprenoient à ce qu'il semble, tout ce grand espace qui se trouvé enfermé entre les murs de Rome, la rue de la porte Colline (via Salaria), la rue qui va des quatre fontaines ou de la porte Pie jusqu'à l'angle de S. Suzanne (via Nomentana,) et de là, suivant en ligne droite le long des jardins de Barberini, et à travers les jardins de Ludovisio, jusqu'aux murs de Rome, ou peu en deçà de la porte Pinciane, à l'angle de l'ancienne rue Collatine. Cet espace qui contenoit autrefois la maison, les jardins et la marché de Salluste, le temple et le cirque de Vénus Erycine ou Sallustienne, les petits temples de la Lune et de Quirinus, les rues de Mamuria et de la Grenada (malum Punicum) et meme peut-etre une partie de la place exécrable (campus Sceleratus,) où l'on enterroit vives les vestales coupables, est aujourdhui occupé par divers terreins incultes, par les eglises de N. D. de la Victoire, de Sante Suzanne et de St. Nicolas de Tolentin, par la rue Salaria, par les vestiges d'un ancien cirque, nommé mal-à-propos, dans quelques cartes modernes, le cirque de Flore, mais qui est en effet le cirque de la Vénus Erycine de Salluste, et enfin par les jardins de Negroni, l'extremité de ceux de Barberini, et la plus grande partie de ceux de Ludovisio." Tom. iii. p. 362.

ly appreciated. He shows, however, the fallacy of a standard in criticism, as there is scarcely a fault in his writings, which some have not praised as a beauty; and, on the other hand, scarcely a beauty which some have not censured as a fault. While Quintilian admires the brevity of his style, there are others who condemn it as vicious and affected;* and Julius Scaliger, with a still more capricious singularity of opinion, declares that diffusion and prolixity are the most striking defects of Sallust. The speeches, interwoven with his history, which some criticks value so highly, are considered by others as false and inelegant fabrications; and Cassius Severus has classed them among the failures of genius with the verses of Cicero and the prose of Virgil. The authenticity of these harangues is certainly too questionable to admit of their exciting such a lively degree of interest as might atone for the interruption which they cause in the narrative; and even the dramatick allusion that should be preserved is destroyed by the uniformity of the historian's style, which confers on the rough, uneducated Marius an array of language as dense and artificial as it gives to the polished and eloquent Cæsar. Without, however, entering into the minuteness of criticism, or pausing upon any of those heretical opinions which we have mentioned, we may consider ourselves orthodox in looking to Sallust as one of the purest models of historical composition; as a writer, whose style, though formed on the study of the Greeks, is peculiarly his own and original both in its faults and in its perfections, being often affected yet always vigorous, and sometimes too brief yet never obscure. The precepts of virtue too with which he has enriched his works are truly philosophical and most admirably inculcated; and we have only to regret, while we read and admire them, that these flowers of moral eloquence are not native to the heart of him who utters them; but, like Virgil's branch of gold upon the gloomy tree in the shades, are a kind of bright excrescence, "*quod non sua seminat arbor.*"

* Quos inter (says Morhofius, Polyhist. lib. iv. cap. xi.) Joh. Petrum Maffeium quoque fuisse Erythæus refert Pinacoth. ii. p. 53. "Illud," inquiens "in eo ferendum non erat, quod Sallustium Crispum, Romanæ decus historiæ, ad sui judicii calculum revocare et damnare audebat; ideo fortasse, quod divinam ejus prudentiam illustremque brevitatem," &c.

For The Port Folio.

CRITICISM.

RURAL POEMS, *Moral and Descriptive; to which are added, Poems on several subjects. By* JOHN HAYES, A. B. *Professour of Languages, Dickinson College, Carlisle. From the press of A. Loudon, Whitehall.* 1807, pp. 180.

Perhaps no species of poetry has been so frequently attempted as the rural. In the spring of life, ere the sensibility of the heart has been frozen by the sad realities which it must experience in an intercourse with the world, the charms of nature make the most vivid and delightful impressions. If the creative imagination of the poet can, even in his closet, so embody his ideas, as to give to airy nothing a local habitation and a name; how much more forcible and exquisite must his sensations be, holding converse with his Creator in his works, when in the words of a royal bard, "The flowers appear on the earth, the season of the song is returned, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land!"

The youthful days of our authour appear to have been passed amid the scenes which he describes.

The following is his preface:

"In presenting the following poems to the publick, the authour feels a degree of diffidence peculiar to a young writer, unknown to the world, and sensible of his own imperfections —a diffidence, which has been much increased by the generous and active part which some of his friends have taken, in recommending the work to the publick, and procuring subscriptions. His apprehensions, lest its appearance might disappoint the publick expectation, and reduce his friends to the disagreeable necessity of retracting their former opinion, have sometimes led him sincerely to repent of the step he has taken. Embarrassing, indeed, is the situation of a young poet: in other writers, truth and utility are sufficient to atone for almost every defect; but in a poet, whose professed object is to please, the reader naturally looks for some degree of excellence; and when he does not find it, he is very justly offended and disgusted. And yet of all writers, none is so ill qualified, as a poet, to judge of the merit of his own compositions; or to determine how far they are calculated to meet with general approbation. The pleasure he finds in composing leads him to expect, that others will find the same pleasure in reading his productions; in which expection he is frequently disappointed. The reason is obvious; the taste of the authour, and that of his readers may be very different; and this diversity, on which side soever the preference lies, will infallibly prevent his success. A poet must generally be, in some measure, pleased with his own compositions; it is this pleasure alone which can reconcile him to the labour necessary to finish any poetical work; but it depends entirely upon the correctness of his taste, whether, or not, he shall be able to communicate any degree of the same pleasure to the judicious reader.

If, then, the authour of these poems has overrated their merit, (which he will be supposed to have done, if they are unworthy of a publication,) the observations already offered will account for his mistake— a mistake common to him with many others in almost every age and country.

A considerable part of the Rural Poems was composed by the authour, some years ago, for his own amusement, and without any immediate view to a publication. Following the bent of his own inclination, he continued from time to time to prosecute the work, till it arrived at its present magnitude. Having from childhood made poetry the amusement of his leisure hours, and being sometimes carried to that species of composition by an impulse almost irresistible, it was natural for him to inquire, whether such an exercise would, in the end, be productive of any benefit to himself, or others. To ascertain this he could not think of any expedient so infallible as that of publishing these poems; as the tribunal of the publick alone has power to pronounce, decisively, and without appeal, upon the merit of any production.

The authour regrets that he engaged in this work at so early a period of his life: several of his first productions, originally intended to make a part of the Rural Poems, have, upon a review been rejected altogether; and others after having undergone very considerable alterations, have been admitted in their present form, only because he had not time still further to improve them, or rather to substitute something better in their place. Other parts which the authour himself condemned, have been retained merely for the sake of connexion After all, it is probable, that in every part of this work, some crudities, inaccuracies, and other blemishes may be found; many of which a greater length of time, and more leisure for a severe examination might have

discovered and removed. Scarcely in any instance has the authour succeeded to such a degree, as fully to satisfy himself. The reader is therefore entreated to exercise candour and forbearance in the perusal of these poems, and to consider them in the light of a rude sketch, merely the outlines of a work, which, if it should ever undergo a second impression (an event not very probable) may appear considerably improved.

With respect to the reception which he may experience, from the publick, the expectations, and the wishes of the authour are very moderate. It was not without much previous hesitation that he resolved to publish these Poems; and now that they are likely to appear, he is sometimes, from various considerations, tempted to wish that they had been yet confined to his desk, or even sentenced to a severer doom. Should their merit and reputation be such as to gratify the partial feelings of his few sincere friends, it would be to him a highly pleasing reflection.

When this little volume shall fall into the hands of a candid and benevolent reader, the authour entreats him, that, if he discovers in it anything like accuracy of description, or justness of sentiment, he would allow these to atone, in some degree, for its various defects; and if he should find it entirely destitute of merit, that he would suffer the incorrectness of the authour's judgment, and perhaps something of that partiality which we feel for what is our own, to pass, as his apology, for having given it to the publick."

A volume of American poetry is almost a phenomenon in literature, and we opened the present one with no very favourable expectations. Rural Poems, are, in general, little more than "pouring out of one phial into another." There have been a few inspired bards, but a herd of servile imitators. In our expectations, however, we were agreeably disappointed, and much pleased to find that we could speak of the volume before us in a tone of commendation. In many parts it is entitled to the claim of originality; and the American scenery with which it abounds, is depicted with much fidelity and beauty. We exhibit the following passages, taken with little selection, as a proof of its merits.

In through my window breaks a boundless song
From all the groves around; the morn's soft breath
Whispers abroad, or through the lifted sash
My pillow fans. Ah! let me haste away!
The hour of prime will soon be past, the winds
Shake from the flower the pearly drops, and waste
Its balmy sweets. Now glows the liquid sky
With rosy light. Shorn of her beams the moon
Pale in the west retires. Close by the wood,
Around the blooming pastures let me stray;
Where bathed in dew the clover blossoms nod
Before the gale, and breathe a rich perfume.
In wanton pride elate, the approaching steed
Snorts at the passenger; or flying o'er
The smoking field, devours the ground with speed:
High in the wind his head; the flaky hair
Lightens along his proudly arched neck;
His fiery nostrils smoke; his waving mane
Like streamers round his sturdy shoulders plays.
Noisy, above my head, on frequent wing
The woodpecks rove, in playful freaks engaged;
Round, thro' the boughs, and leaves, and open sky,
They urge the sportive chace; till gathered on
Some aged bough, loud the mock quarrel sounds
In harsh and scolding notes: then parting wide
Each fastens on some bare decayed trunk;
And with their beaks the hardened oak resounds.
But, now behold, the dazzling orb of day
Flames in the east. Down to the dewy green
The feathered tribes repair; or to the wood
Silent retire; all but the tuneful bird,
That sings melodious from the lofty elm:

Charmer of groves, that, on some airy top,
Sole seated, sings through all the live-long day,
And warbling o'er a thousand varied notes,
Pours her sweet melody around. Oft too,
When all is hushed amid the silent hours,
Serenely bright o'er nature's midnight rest
Smiles the fair moon, and from the distant wood
Is heard the night-bird's interrupted strain;
Soft breaks her musick from the sleeping grove,
And charms the ear of night.
Rising with morn, the breezy zephyrs shake
The spangled mead, play o'er the bending corn,
And murmur thro' the grove; or on the floods
Gently disport, and curl the restless waves.

The following description of Winter, is, at the same time, faithful and poetick.

Not wrapt in fogs, 'mid ever-frowning storms,
And deepening glooms, in sullen state enthroned,
Our winter reigns; of piercing eye, and stern,
Tho' cloudless aspect, on the northern blast
He rides sublime, and rules with iron rod
The prostrate world. But ere he yet arrives
To rule the year, he sends his harbingers,
November's rains, poured down in copious floods
From leaden skies. All night the ceaseless shower
Beats on the wood: and fast at every drop
Struck from the boughs, the withered leaves descend.
Next morn the forest waves it's naked arms
Before the blast. Stretched o'er the vale immense
The torrent glitters to the morning sun:
Proud of a transient greatness, not its own,
It foams, and boils, and roars along the plain.
Heard high amid the clouds, the nightly cry
Of banded wild-geese, through the pathless air
Steering with heaven-taught wing their annual course,
Forewarns the swain of winter's near approach.
. . . A somber gloom
Invests the world, and night in deepening shades
Closes around. Scarce yet perceived, minute,
And rare the snowy particles descend;
Felt on the hand of busy swain, as to
His nightly charge he bears the fragrant hay.

Now let the fire be trimmed, and social chat
Drive fast the hours; the song and rustick tale
Go merry round; while heard without, the storm
Howls unregarded, on the face of things
Effecting change unseen; till from his door,
The swain surprised; sees by his taper's light,
The whitened ground, and fast descending snow.
Whence is it that this scene has charms, and o'er
The musing soul a pensive pleasure spreads,
Inspiring happy thought! these precious hours
I steal from sleep, while silence dwells around.
My windows closed, the blazing hearth emits
A cheering ray. I ruminating sit,
And from the blast that sadly sighs abroad
Catch inspiration; through the boundless fields
Of fancy stray; in Athens, or in Rome,
Converse with sages born in other days,
Or to the fairy world of fiction rapt,
Paint to my mind, far in the watery waste,
Some happy isle, where spring forever blooms.

Thus on my mind poetick raptures swell,
Too great for utterance; emotions strange
Struggle within my breast, and transports high;
A sweet delirium, known to bards alone.
Oft too, the songs of ancient time return
To memory, which in younger days I read
With keen delight. Say, which amid the band
Shall raise the song: shall Milton's heavenly muse,
Or Virgil's polished strains, or Shakspeare's lays
Demand my ear? these too I love; but these
Must yield, when to my view the Grecian bard
Unfolds his page, and in harmonious song
Pours his resistless soul. Father of bards,
Whose boundless mind surveyed the vast extent
Of nature's field, and swelled his matchless song
With all her choicest stores! Majestick, broad,
And deep: thus rolls the Mississippi's flood
Through southern plains, swelled with the watery wealth
Of half a world. Whate'er in song divine

Has moved the soul, since first her heavenly harp
Urania strung, to charm the listening world,
Is here contained; hence other bards derived
Their borrowed wealth; yet ne'er could half exhaust
The golden mine.

Nor would I, Milton, thy high-sounding harp,
The awful grandeur of thy soaring thoughts,
And thy rich fancy's ne'er exhausted stores
Neglect, or lightly pass; whether the deep
Tartarian gulf, or heaven's refulgent fields,
Or Eden's rosy bow'rs thy verse depict.
Nor bards of later times, illustrious heirs
Of deathless fame, lights of Britannia's isle.
Cowper, thy moral and descriptive lay
Repeated oft, yet still with new delight.
Nor thee, great bard* of evangelick song!
Thou stored with lofty thought, and soaring high
Above terrestial things: the world retires,
And vast eternity her awful scenes
Unfolds; till on the boundless view I'm lost,
And wonder how th' immortal, high-born mind,
Her dignity forgot, could, with such zeal,
Pursue the baubles of so vain a world.

We have no hesitation to say that the Rural Poems display poetick genius, and classical taste; but in many parts there are inaccuracies which we should be pleased to see corrected in another edition. Had they been written in Latin or Greek, we believe the "professour of languages" would have discovered many false quantities, which have passed him unnoticed in its present form. We observe, with displeasure, the Americanisms *illy* and *lengthy* used; and it was not without some surprise that we, in our northern climate, were told of *shepherds* singing. Concerning those gentlemen, we can only say, with the correct and elegant Goldsmith, that to us "Thyrsis is one of the most insipid fellows we ever conversed with; and as for Corydon, we do not choose his company."

* Dr. Young.

For The Port Folio.

CLASSICAL LEARNING.

(*Concluded from page* 301.)

The younger PLINY was the Proconsul of Bithynia, and nephew of the famous Natural Historian. His Letters, though overdressed, with regard to language, exhibit a benevolent heart and a cultivated mind, and are the best description of the manners of the age of Trajan, whose favourite he was, and whose panegyrick he has composed in the usual manner in which Princes are praised, *i. e.* from invention, representing to them rather what they ought to be, than what they are, to excite them to deserve praise, by observing how well it sounds.

—

EUTROPIUS, and AURELIUS VICTOR wrote short summaries of the Roman History in the middle age. Their language is pure, considering the period they wrote in, and they are sometimes put in the hands of youth, to give them a connected view of the Roman History.

Florius, and Velleius Paterculus, are abbreviations of the same kind, and possess very little merit.

—

SENECA, the Stoick philosopher ought to be mentioned as a classick authour, though according to Quintilian, he corrupted the Roman eloquence, and introduced a bad taste. He was an oratour, as well as a philosopher, and like Aristotle and Plato, has treated both of Natural and Moral subjects. He was the Preceptor of Nero, and one of the victims of his cruelty. Seneca was of Corduba, in Spain. By the bounty of his master, he became immensely rich, and the maxims of his philosophy were pure, his manner of living was splendid and magnificent. This circumstance he has thought fit to convey to posterity himself, lest some other person should have gloried in the discovery, and made a merit of communicating it to the publick. Seneca has the honour of the famous *Quinquinnium Neronis*, as it was while he listened to Seneca's counsels, that Nero gave so great satisfaction. The faithfulness and worth of Seneca were also set in a stronger light by the enormities of Nero, when no longer under his influence. Seneca's Exercises in Rhetorick, are puerile and contemptible, like all essays on feigned occasions.

For The Port Folio.

THE SIGNORA AVEDUTA,

From the German and French.

It was midnight, and I was on the great road between Naples and Rome, when my carriage broke down;

I had only one servant with me; we could not see a step before us, and were obliged to manage as well as we could to drag on the carriage as far as the post-house a mile off, in the hope of being able to have it repaired; but on our arrival there we found no other shelter than what was intended for the post horses and for the men who took care of them. We were in the midst of the Pontian marshes, and the bad air, which is most noxious at this season of the year, had driven every one else for refuge to the neighbouring towns. It was with very great difficulty and only by promising to recompense handsomely, the ostler and postilion for their trouble, that I could prevail on them to undertake the repairs of my carriage, and they were examining it for that purpose when we were joined by a pilgrim who had preceded me, and who was adroitly contriving to draw a handkerchief from my servant's pocket, when I caught him in the fact, and begged of him to be so good as to leave in its place. *Scusi Signore*, (excuse me, Sir,) said he, as if he had done it from inattention, and quietly returning to his station in the corner, wrapped his cloak around him and soon forgot his disappointment in sleep. Being in want of tools, and several other necessaries I endeavoured to prevail on the postillion to take a horse and go as far as the next town, and if possible to procure them, but just as he had begun his preparations for setting out, and I was making up my mind to the remaining a considerable time in this miserable place, the effort, for it was no inconsiderable one, was prevented, and the train of my reflections interrupted by the arrival of a carriage, at the door of which I immediately presented myself. Whoever you are, said I to the travellers, whom the darkness of the night at first rendered invisible to me, whoever you are, you will not surely refuse your assistance to a stranger on his way to Rome, whose carriage has met with an accident, and who is utterly at a loss what to do, or how to proceed on his journey. No certainly, replied a voice, which I knew to be that of a women, *Giacomo! Pietro!* come to this gentleman's assistance and do everything in your power to be of service to him; but said she turning to me, why stay exposed to the cold in that miserable hovel? I am also on my way to Rome, why not take a place with me? One of my people shall remain and assist yours, and they will follow you with the carriage as soon as it can be repaired: so saying the good Lady, whom I could now barely discern by the help of a taper from the stable, made room for me next to herself, whilst two persons who appeared to be her female attendants remained on the front seat. I would have excused myself; no ceremony said she, rather impatiently, I cannot bear it, come sit down here, come quick, no affectation; so I accepted her offer and placed myself beside her, and having ordered my servant to follow me to Rome together with the Lady's, and to bring on my carriage as soon as possible, we drove on. The stranger soon overwhelmed me with questions: "Whence I came? How long I had been in Italy? My object in visiting it? My rank in life? My age? and whether I was single or married?" All these questions followed each other rapidly, and without her appearing to pay any attention to my answers; but what surprised me much more was that she seemed to suppose I had asked her a question, and to feel herself called on to answer it, when in fact I should have been very far from taking such a liberty: "why, I am going to the baths of Pisa," said she; as if I had known she was going there, "why am I going to Pisa? I go there in search of a husband, and it will be no easy thing to find one."

These last words gave rise in my mind to the most singular and unpleasant conjectures. Every thing about my travelling companion seemed to announce opulence and high rank; why then did she think it so difficult to find a husband? The to-

tal darkness of the night rendered it impossible for me to form any idea of her shape or features, and I concluded that she must be old and ugly; besides her familiar manners and very great affability towards one who was a perfect stranger to her, gave me no favourable idea of her delicacy or prudence. To tell the truth I was not without fears, that in offering me so generously a seat in her carriage, she might have intended to save herself the trouble of going as far as Pisa. As such was the result of my reasoning, I got as far from her as I could, and drew myself up in the corner; but I was wrong in doing so, for I soon found that her confidential prattle had only arisen from her impossibility to refrain from speaking on the subject which seemed to engross her whole mind. "It is not" continued she, "that there are not a great many men who would think themselves blessed in the possession of my heart and hand, for thank God, I am still young, and neither ugly nor stupid, and if I do not flatter myself, am not deficient in those accomplishments which become my station; but it would be a difficult matter to find a man such as I could wish. I have already been twice married; and neither time happily, you will not therefore think it strange that I should now be rather difficult to please, both times I thought I had the best reasons in the world for supposing I had chosen well; I know you would like to hear my story, and I will relate it to you, for I count on your discretion, and as I believe you to possess a sound judgment, founded on long experience and knowledge of the world, I must request of you in the end to give me your advice, as to the manner in which I must in future conduct myself, in order to avoid those dangers I have hitherto heedlessly exposed myself to." So lost in astonishment was I at the confidence placed in me, that before I could recover myself sufficiently to thank her for her compliment, she had begun her history in the following words:

"I lost my mother while I was yet a child, and my father, who did not like a convent education, determined to bring me up at home, where the seclusion was as great as in convents of the most rigid order.

I was every Sunday carried to mass, and sometimes I was allowed to walk in the garden, which was surrounded by high walls. Such were the recreations which, until I had attained my fifteenth year, alone varied the uniformity of my life. One evening, as I was taking my accustomed walk, I distinctly heard a man's voice, which appeared to proceed from the street, adjoining the garden wall. The voice was accompanied by a lute, and the words I soon discovered to be extempore. Never had musick appeared so delightful to me, and, perhaps, never will again." Here the lady paused, and turning to me, Stranger, said she "the charming age of fifteen comes never to return. A woman can hear but once the first eulogium on her beauty; the first declaration of love can be made but once." Such was the purport of the song addressed to me; I was fifteen, and I leave you to judge of the impression made on me. I wished, above all things, to be able to scale the wall, but it was high and rugged, and the shades of night had already extended their influence over the universe, when the voice ceased, and I returned to my prison, divided between hope and fear.

What an idea did I not conceive of this unknown admirer;

"My fancy formed him of th' angelick kind,
"Some emanation of the all-beauteous mind."

How ardently I wished to see, and to speak to him! At last, evening returned, and I once more heard the voice which had so much pleased me. The same obstacles, however, which had before prevented me from seeing him, still existed, but I contrived to make a small aperture in the wall, through which we

could converse. I now heard that he had often seen me at church, that he had long suppressed his love and admiration, and that the height of his ambition was to be sometimes allowed to amuse me with his voice; he added, that the idea of affording me any pleasure, would be to him supreme felicity. I pressed him to tell me his name, and to give me such a description of himself, as that I might be able to recognise him the following Sunday at mass, but he refused to comply with either of my requests.

'Were you to see me,' said he, 'the charm, if there exists one, would immediately be dispelled, my voice would no longer afford you any pleasure, and I should lose my only consolation.' His refusal, however, only the more forcibly excited my curiosity. "Perhaps," said I "you have neither birth nor fortune to recommend you, and can the want of two such slight and frivolous advantages, so far overwhelm you with false shame, as to prevent your making yourself known to me! Ah, what are rank and fortune in comparison with talents such as yours!" 'No,' replied he, 'my birth is illustrious, and my fortune considerable; but, I conjure you, do not insist on overcoming my reluctance to make myself known to you. You would be shocked at the discovery you would make, and I should forever lose the place I now hold in your good opinion.' I own, at that moment I felt something like fear; my imagination conjured up the strangest phantoms. I had often heard of evil spirits, and magicians, and I had fancied to myself these imaginary beings as very different from anything in the human form. Unable to conceal my terrour, I threatened my unknown friend, no longer to listen to his voice, and was preparing to put my threat into execution, when he at last promised to satisfy me, 'Stay,' said he, 'since it must be so, you shall know all. I *am* of mortal kind. But, alas! few are they whom Nature has so cruelly ill treated.' So terrified had I been, that I was agreeably surprized by this little explanation. "What!" said I, "is that all, and do you pretend to love me, and at the same time, have you so little esteem for me, as to imagine that a circumstance such as the want of personal beauty, could make you appear less amiable in my eyes. If as I am afraid I cannot but acknowledge, I feel myself already prepossessed in your favour, do you not owe it to your melodious voice, to your mental charms? Of what importance is your external appearance? have I ever bestowed a thought on what it might possibly be?"

'Would to heaven,' replied he, that I could flatter myself that such would always be your opinion; I once more conjure you to suffer me to remain unknown.'

I at last, however, succeeded in overcoming his reluctance to gratify my curiosity, and finished by exacting a promise, that on the following Sunday he would be at mass at St. Charles's, near the third column to the right, on entering, and that he would appear in blue and gold:—such are the liveries of the imagination, and such have always been my admiration.

(To be Continued.)

POLITE LITERATURE.

LETTERS FROM BRUTUS.

LETTER VII.

To R. B. Sheridan, Esq.

SIR,

Some of the severer philosophers have excluded eloquence, poetry and wit, from their system of a republick, as tending to mislead the people, to perplex those councils which wisdom only should be suffered to guide. This will readily be allowed too rigid an idea for modern times, yet it were well, perhaps, if in publick men and in publick assemblies, the more solid qualities of knowledge, virtue, and prudence,

were allowed a superiority to those ornamental talents which captivate and dazzle the lively and the unthinking.

You have contrived to apply wit to subjects generally held unsusceptible of its attractions, to the dry and intricate operations of figures, to the complicated details of finance, to the laborious investigation of publick accounts. Perhaps, however, exclusive of the exuberance of your fancy, this talent might in some measure be derived from the private habits of your life. The Lydians are said to have invented gaming, in a season of famine, to appease hunger: so, if a man cannot pay an account, it seems an allowable expedient if he can contrive to laugh at it. From the same source certain splenetick people have traced your unwearied attention to the national debt. Who, says your favourite poet,

"Who can hold a fire in his hand
By thinking on the frosty Caucasus?"

But the millions so often in your mouth have some little connexion with the money you hope for in your purse; because there is a distant prospect that you may one day be in a situation to draw on them for yourself.

In your late annual harangue on this subject, you ventured on some expressions which even the most innocent and unsuspicious of the new country members could not help applying. When you talked of "deluding our creditors," and of the "land of promise," they looked to one another as Scrub does to Mrs. Sullen in the play, with faces lighted up by the discovery of a joke amidst the bewildering darkness of the unfunded debt and the sinking fund. The last phrase, as they were ignorant of its being borrowed from Junius, they could hardly have expected from you, as it was a bible one; but they recollected other instances of your having shown a perfect knowledge of the history of the Jews*.

Some indeed, of the elder and graver of those country gentlemen, who have some oldfashioned landed interest prejudices about them, do not so easily relish jokes upon publick matters, when uttered by men who have "no stake in the hedge," they will allow a D—— to wander after extravagant conceits, or a Hill to twist scripture into buffoonery; because those gentlemen have some thousands of acres to back their pretentions to humour; as if wit, like bail, were to be justified by the extent of a man's possessions: they will even pardon your friend Mr. Coke of Norfolk his honest declaration of disapproving "every one thing the minister has done," because a gentleman of so many thousands a-year is entitled to that sort of unperplexed wholesale understanding, to which such declaration is suitable. But from you, Sir, they expect some appositeness in your allusions, and some argument in your objections.

Those gentlemen, however, should consider whether the limitations they would impose on you are consonant to reason and justice. When you come down to the House to bully Administration by strong assertions, or to ridicule it by flippant jests, you are only labouring in your vocation. The House of Commons is your estate, your freehold, out of which you are to draw by every means in your power, as they do from their acres, your revenue and your credit. The publick, the country of which you talk so well, is not the object of your concern, but merely the object of your discussion; it is only the topick of your argument, the canvas for the pictures of your fancy, the theme for the display of your wit. Whether it really thrives or not, whether the measures you oppose be really for its advantage, cannot reasonably be supposed to have any impression on your mind. The prosperity of the publick *estate*, with the situation of which you seem so minutely acquainted, is nothing to you; its stewardship, whether it prospered or not, might be something, and you

* Vid. an admirable scene in the *School for Scandal*.

have many of the virtues of a steward.

But the present time is unfavourable to the success of your exertion. Your pleasantry will not unbend the muscles of those plodding faces which are to be seen in Lombard-street, and the Stock-Exchange; and I will suggest a doubt whether it be worth your while to disturb your holiday festivity with the more serious and elaborate calculations of your Anti-Budget. The little hieroglyphick article at the end of your most favourite newspaper, will outweigh all the lengthened columns it devotes to your eloquence; while the 3 per cents are at 80, the minister will smile at the comick powers of Mr. S——, and the tragick predictions of Dr. Price.

BRUTUS.

BIOGRAPHY.

ARABELLA HUNT.

This lady was admired for her beauty, her fine voice, and exquisite skill on the lute, and for her exemplary conduct in the most trying situations. Queen Mary had so great an attachment to the amiable Arabella, that she retained her as an attendant; in which situation she amused her majesty's private hours in the concert, and often with such common and popular songs as "Cold and raw," once at the expense of Purcell's feelings. But Queen Anne did not particularly notice her, though she taught her musick. The nobility highly valued her, and she was received with respect in every company. Beautiful and engaging as she was, she had no silly conceited airs nor affectation, but complied with the wishes of the humble as readily as with those of the illustrious: indeed, to oblige was a happiness not to be resisted by her; and she who possessed so many excellencies, alone seemed unconscious of them. She often visited Mr. Rooth, of Epsom, who married the countess dowager of Donnegal, a lady who was particularly fond of musick. It is difficult to describe the power of so lovely a woman, with such uncommon virtues. He who saw and heard her, must be fascinated. "So excellent was her skill," says Mr. Granger, "that she was listened to with silent raptures and tears of admiration." Congreve forgot the wise man's advice, "Use not the company of a woman that is a singer, lest thou be taken with her allurements;" for he was entirely captivated. To her he addressed one of the finest of his poems. "You make," says he, "every place alike heavenly, wherever you are." It is therefore no wonder he was, as he subscribes himself, her "Adorer." What pity, that she, who merited happiness so much, should have been married to one incapable of conferring it. This modest woman, wife to less than a man, died Dec. 26, 1705. Her devoted poet, on seeing her portrait by Kneller, wrote, in remembrance of the publick, and his own particular loss, the following lines, which are preserved upon the print:—

"Were there on earth another voice like thine,
Another hand so blest with skill divine,
The late afflicted world some hopes might have,
And harmony recall thee from the grave."

EPITAPH.

Know thou, O stranger, to the fame
Of this much lov'd, much honour'd name!
(For none that knew him need be told)
A warmer heart death ne'er made cold.

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